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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN/CHINA: FM QURESHI LAUDS PRC-PAKISTAN FRIENDSHIP

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Pakistan's friendship with the PRC is a "cornerstone" of Pakistan's foreign policy and a "model for other countries to emulate," Pakistani Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in a February 23 speech at a PRC think tank. He welcomed China's role as an intermediary between India and Pakistan and praised China's "constructive role" in Afghanistan. FM Qureshi's speech stressed Afghanistan's strategic importance to Pakistan and Pakistan's geopolitical significance as the "fulcrum of Asia." He announced a goal of increasing bilateral trade with the PRC to US\$15 billion (from its 2009 level of US\$6.8 billion) and welcomed Chinese companies to invest in major energy projects in Pakistan. FM Qureshi expressed Pakistan's strong interest in membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), commenting that SCO Secretary General Imanaliev told him that the SCO was nearly finished working out criteria for new members to join the organization. End Summary.

China Cornerstone of Pakistan Foreign Policy

¶2. (SBU) FM Qureshi emphasized that friendship with China was the "cornerstone" of Pakistan's foreign policy and "model for other countries with diverse systems to emulate" in a February 23 public address at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated China Institute of International Studies, adding that the people of Pakistan would always stand with their "Chinese friends" just as the Chinese had always stood with Pakistan. FM Qureshi reiterated Pakistan's support for a "one China" policy and noted that Pakistan condemned any attempt to undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On counterterrorism, he expressed confidence that with the help of China, Pakistan would prevail against terrorism.

Pakistan Welcomes Chinese Role in India-Pakistan Relations

¶3. (SBU) Pakistan was working seriously to improve relations with India and hoped for the early resumption of the Composite Dialogue, FM Qureshi said. Pakistan appreciated China's "constructive role" in sending a special envoy to New Delhi and Islamabad following the Mumbai terrorist attacks and welcomed a future role for China in promoting reconciliation and understanding between Pakistan and

India. India must decide whether it would accept the PRC playing a third-party, intermediary role, according to FM Qureshi, but as far as Pakistan was concerned, the PRC had a "blank check" to play "as active of a role as it wished" in helping to resolve the India-Pakistan dispute.

Pakistan Praises PRC Role in Afghanistan

¶ 14. (SBU) China was playing a "very constructive role" in Afghanistan, Qureshi said in response to a journalist's question. He commended Chinese investment in Afghanistan for creating jobs and furthering the international community's goal of promoting economic development in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Important for Pakistan

¶ 15. (SBU) FM Qureshi described a consensus within Pakistan that an independent, strong and stable Afghanistan was essential for Pakistan's own security and development. He explained that international terrorism originated from Afghanistan and that Al Qaeda should be defeated in Afghanistan. Any solution to the problems in Afghanistan must be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led, FM Qureshi suggested, adding that Pakistan stood ready to play a role in Afghan reconciliation efforts if called upon by Afghanistan. FM Qureshi described a dramatic improvement in Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, citing President Zardari's attendance at President Karzai's inauguration and the resumption of Tripartite Commission meetings involving military officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan and NATO as evidence.

Pakistan as Fulcrum of Asia

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¶ 16. (SBU) FM Qureshi declared that the 21st century would be Asia's century and noted that the shift in power from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the United States to Asia was already underway. For geographic and historical reasons, Pakistan viewed itself as the fulcrum of Asia and wanted to be a part of evolving Asian architecture, according to FM Qureshi.

Pakistan Seeks Increased Trade, PRC Investment

¶ 17. (SBU) FM Qureshi pledged to increase bilateral trade from US\$6.8 billion in 2009 to US\$15 billion "in the coming years." He praised China's economic assistance as "focused on tangible development that strengthens economic fundamentals as opposed to handouts or conditional aid that reinforce the vicious cycle of dependency." Noting that 120 Chinese companies and 10,000 Chinese workers were working in Pakistan, he welcomed Chinese companies "to take advantage of investment opportunities" such as the Thar Coal project, Diamer-Basha dam, Dasu dam and Bunji dam projects that would be launched in the near future.

Pakistan Wants to Join SCO

¶ 18. (SBU) Pakistan was "keen" to become to a SCO member and to "play a role in SCO commensurate with Pakistan's geopolitical status," FM Qureshi said in response to a journalist's question. FM Qureshi said that he had reiterated Pakistan's interest in SCO membership in a February 22 meeting with SCO Secretary General Muratbek Imanaliev, who reportedly had told him that SCO was nearly finished working out the criteria for new members to join the organization.

HUNTSMAN